

# ARNOLD ARBORETUM

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# BULLETIN

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# POPULAR INFORMATION

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**Pieris** or **Andromeda floribunda**, judging by an experience of over fifty years, is the only broad-leaved evergreen to which nothing ever happens in this climate. It is not attacked by borers, the leaves never become discolored, and the flower-buds formed in autumn and almost as conspicuous during the winter as the flowers are not injured by the lowest temperature which has been recorded in southern New England. It is a round-topped shrub of compact habit, sometimes eight or ten feet across and five or six feet high, with small pointed, dark green leaves and short terminal clusters of pure white flowers. A native of high altitudes on the southern Appalachian Mountains, this shrub is rare and local in its distribution as a wild plant, but for more than a century has been valued in England and largely propagated by English nurserymen. It can be found in several American nurseries and is now covered in the Arboretum with its pure white flowers. A comparatively small compact shrub, it is more valuable for general planting than any of the dwarf *Rhododendrons*.

**Amelanchiers.** The Shad Bushes, as *Amelanchiers* are often called because they are supposed to bloom when shad begin to ascend the rivers from the sea, add much in early May to the beauty of the Arboretum. It is a genus in which North America has almost a monopoly as only one small shrubby species grows on the mountains of central Europe, and another in China and Japan. In North America it grows in many forms from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Newfoundland to the Gulf States. Some of the species are trees and others large or small shrubs; they flower in the spring before the leaves ap-

pear or when they are partly grown, or in the case of a few species when the leaves are fully grown, the flowering time of the whole group extending through several weeks. They all have handsome flowers, with long delicate white petals and small, dark blue or nearly black pome-like fruit open at the top, the flesh of which in most of the species is sweet and edible. *Amelanchier canadensis*, which is the first species to bloom in the Arboretum, has now been in flower for several days. It is a tree which occasionally grows to the height of sixty feet with a tall trunk eighteen inches in diameter. The leaves begin to unfold as the flowers open and are then covered with silky white hairs, making the whole plant look white at this time of the year. This beautiful tree does not grow naturally nearer Boston than western Massachusetts; it is common in western New York, and it is the common and often the only species in the southern states in which it grows to the Gulf coast. Owing to an old confusion in determination and names this fine tree, which was originally named by Linnaeus, has been rare in gardens, an entirely different plant having appeared in them under this name. This is also a fine tree, differing conspicuously from *A. canadensis* in the red color of the young leaves which are destitute or nearly destitute of any hairy covering. By botanists this tree is now called *Amelanchier laevis*. It is a native tree in the Arboretum and there are a number of specimens growing naturally on the bank above the Crabapples on the left-hand side of the Forest Hills Road where it blooms a few days later than *Amelanchier canadensis*. Another species which is a native plant in the Arboretum, *A. obovalis*, is a large shrub rather than a tree with young leaves like those of *A. canadensis* covered with white silky hairs. This shrub has been largely planted in the Arboretum along the drive of the Valley Road near the base of Hemlock Hill. Several other species of the eastern states are established in the Arboretum; these are all shrubs, often spreading into wide clumps. There are other species in the west still to introduce into cultivation, and on the whole the genus is not well understood either in the field or in gardens.

*Corylopsis* is an Asiatic genus of the Witch Hazel Family, with fragrant yellow flowers in long drooping clusters appearing before the leaves which have a general resemblance to those of the Witch Hazel. Nearly all the species are represented in the Arboretum but they are not all hardy, and the flower-buds of the Chinese species are usually killed. Three Japanese species, however, are flowering well this year, *C. Gotoana*, *C. pauciflora*, and *C. spicata*. The first was introduced into the Arboretum from central Japan; it is the hardiest and largest specimen, growing five or six feet tall and broad in this climate. It can be considered one of the handsomest of the early spring-flowering shrubs. The other two species are flowering much better than usual this year but cannot be depended on every spring.

*Prinsepia sinensis*. The value of this handsome shrub becomes more evident every year. It is the first plant in the Arboretum to unfold its leaves; these are already fully grown and the bright yellow flowers are beginning to open. It is a perfectly hardy, fast-growing shrub; the young leaves and the flowers have never been injured by spring



frosts, and it can be said that it is the best contribution Mongolia has ever made to our gardens. *Prinsepia sinensis* has proved difficult to propagate but occasionally produces a few seeds which have germinated. It can be increased, too, by cuttings but it is doubtful if this shrub becomes popular in this country until the Arboretum plants begin to fruit more freely. The second species, *Prinsepia uniflora*, from western China, with narrower leaves and smaller white flowers, is perfectly hardy but in every way a less desirable ornamental plant. Either species would make an excellent hedge.

There is a good collection of wild Pear-trees growing in the Arboretum, especially those from western China, and some of them are among the most beautiful of all flowering trees. To pomologists, too, they are of special interest as the wild types from which the cultivated pears have been derived, and as possible factors in the production of new and perhaps hardier races of fruit trees. There is no native Pear-tree in Japan or any part of America, but they are common and widely distributed in China, on the Himalayas, in southwestern Asia and in southeastern and southern Europe. The most important Pear-tree but not the most beautiful in flower is *Pyrus communis*, one of the European species from which the common garden pears have been derived. Some of the species, like *Pyrus elaeagnifolia*, of southeastern Europe are conspicuous in early spring before the flowers open from the silver color of the leaves, but as ornamental trees some of the Chinese species are better worth cultivating than those from Europe or western Asia. All the Chinese species are now growing in the Arboretum and many of them have large, handsome, lustrous leaves and fruit which is conspicuous. Among the species longest in the Arboretum the handsomest is perhaps *P. ovidea*, a native of the northern provinces and one of the first in the collection to open its flowers. These are followed by yellow juicy fruit of good flavor which, unlike those of all other Pear-trees, are largest at the base and gradually taper to the apex. Another remarkable thing about this tree is that in the autumn the leaves turn as bright scarlet as those of any Red Maple. As an ornamental tree this Pear-tree deserves the attention of gardeners and its hardiness and the quality of its fruit suggest its possible value in the production of a new race of fruit trees. Another Chinese species, *Pyrus Bretschneideri*, is also well worth the attention of pomologists. It is a tree with large lustrous leaves, large flowers and yellow, nearly globose well flavored fruit. This is probably, in part at least, the wild origin of the excellent pears which are sold in Peking during September and October. The brown-fruited *Pyrus serotina*, one of the species discovered by Wilson in western China, is of particular interest as from this species are derived the round russet pears which in many forms have been so generally cultivated in Japan and are occasionally seen in America. This tree has been growing in the Arboretum since 1887. The Leconte and Keiffer Pears are two hybrids well known in this country where they were raised by crossing the garden Pear with cultivated forms of *P. serotina*. These hybrids have not proved very hardy in the north, but have been planted in immense numbers in some of the southern states where they produced large crops of fruit until the trees were attacked by the pear blight which has ruined many of these

orchards. Pear blight has never attacked *Pyrus ovidea*, which has been growing for twenty years in the Arboretum, or *P. Bretschneideri*.

**Plum-trees.** North America is the real home of Plum-trees as it is of Hawthorns. The different species range across the continent from the valley of the St. Lawrence River to the Rio Grande. The species and individuals are most abundant in eastern and southern Kansas, eastern Oklahoma, southern Arkansas and Texas from the valley of the Red River to the Edwards Plateau, and the genus is represented in this region by more species than are found in all the world outside of North America. Some of the species are of considerable size and others are large or small shrubs which frequently spread in sandy soil into thickets covering acres. The first of the American Plums to flower in the Arboretum, the so-called Canada Plum, *Prunus nigra*, has already opened its flowers. This is a northern tree ranging in Canada from New Brunswick through the valley of the St. Lawrence River and along the northern shore of Lake Superior to Winnipeg. It occurs rather sparingly in northern New England, western New York and westward to Montana. It is a handsome little tree with dark close bark, a round-topped head of spreading branches, wide, coarsely-toothed glandular leaves, and large flowers, which unlike those of other American Plum-trees turn pink as they begin to fade. Several forms grown for the excellence of their fruit are cultivated by pomologists. The flowers of *Prunus nigra* are followed in a few days by those of *P. americana*, the blue-fruited *P. alleghaniensis*, a native of southern Connecticut and western Pennsylvania, an interesting species of considerable ornamental value, *P. Watsonii*, the little Sand Plum of Kansas and Oklahoma, and *P. Munsoniana* of the Kansas to Texas region, the origin of Wild Goose and many other varieties cultivated for their fruit, and by *P. hortulana*, a native of the region from southern Illinois to southern Missouri and Oklahoma. This is perhaps the handsomest of the American Plum-trees and one of the last to flower. In cultivation it is a round-topped tree with wide-spreading branches. The flowers are not more than half an inch in diameter and open before the leaves which are narrow, long-pointed and lustrous. The fruit is scarlet, very lustrous, and looks like a large cherry. Forms of this tree, like Golden Beauty, Kanawha, Wayland and Cumberland, are grown and distributed by nurseries as fruit trees, but quite apart from the value of the fruit. The only Asiatic Wild Plum, *P. salicina*, blooms as early as *P. nigra* and is now in flower. As an ornamental tree this has no special value but it is esteemed by pomologists and is now widely planted in this country in many forms for its edible red or yellow fruit.

**The Sugar Maple.** The Sugar Maple is again exceptionally fully covered with its long clusters of expanded flowers, and just now is an object of great beauty and interest. A true lover of the country, life in cities and their suburbs has little attraction for the Sugar Maple, one of the most splendid of the whole genus. It needs the free and pure air of the forests and country roadsides, and finds its greatest happiness on the low hills of New England and Michigan, and in the rich protected valleys of the Appalachian Mountains. In such positions few trees surpass it in size or in the splendor of its autumn foliage.